



REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

DATE: 1 April 2009

SUBJECT: REVISED MEMBERSHIP OF THE ADMISSION FORUM IN THE NEW SCHOOL ADMISSIONS CODE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To inform the Executive Board of the main provisions of the revised Code of Practice on Admissions and regulations governing the establishment of a mandatory Admission Forum, and to agree the composition of the core membership of the Forum.

Background Information

2. The DCSF introduced a new School Admissions Code on 10 February 2009. This new code replaces the earlier version published in February 2007 and once more, is mandatory. The new Code reflects changes from both the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the more recent Education and Skills Act 2008.
3. The Admission Forum remains a mandatory body. However the changes to membership are sufficiently significant that it is necessary for the Local Authority to determine the membership and constitution of the Forum within the regulations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The Executive Board is asked to:
 - Note the report.
 - Agree the core membership of the Forum as detailed in the main report.

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Electoral Wards Affected:

ALL

Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in

Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Executive Board of the main provisions of the revised Code of Practice on Admissions and regulations governing the establishment of a mandatory Admission Forum, and to agree the composition of the core membership of the Forum.

2.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The DCSF introduced a new School Admissions Code on 10 February 2009. This new code replaces the earlier version published in February 2007 and once more, is mandatory. The new Code reflects changes from both the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the more recent Education and Skills Act 2008.
- 2.2 The Education Act 2002 required each local authority to establish an Admissions Forum and the membership was agreed at an Executive Board in January 2003. The new School Admissions Code has made significant alterations to the constitution of the Admission Forum, and it is necessary to seek the approval of the Executive Board to establish the revised membership.
- 2.3 The new School Admissions Code has also brought forward a number of other significant changes that will come into force over a period of time. Some

changes are effectively immediately, including some revisions to and strengthening of our local Fair Access Protocol, which seeks to ensure fair access to school places. Extended consultation on co-ordinated admission arrangements now requires a minimum of eight weeks consultation time, to include consultation with parents. Local authorities were required to comply with this prior to the new regulations coming into force on 31 December 2008. The consultation in Leeds was publicised via public notices placed into the Yorkshire Evening Post, and local free newspapers, as well as publication on the website.

- 2.4 The new regulations will require the local authority to provide a single point of entry to all schools from September 2010. Parents will only be able to apply directly to their home local authority for a place in any school from that time. This will be simpler and less confusing for parents, and will mean that no school or academy will be in a position to make an offer of a place directly to any parent. For in year transfers this takes effect from September 2010 and will involve the local authority receiving and administering all transfer requests for community, voluntary controlled, voluntary aided and foundation schools and academies, and making offers on behalf of all schools. Full coordination of all transfers across local authorities will be required from September 2010.
- 2.5 The local authority must also ensure that parents are neither required to collect an application form from a school or return it directly to the school. We already provide preference forms directly to parents, and make them available on our website. Previously parents have been able to return them directly to Education Leeds or to the school of their first choice. In future we will request that parents return all forms directly to Education Leeds.
- 2.6 Admissions authorities are now able to include a statement about the ethos of their school in their admission arrangements but are not able to attach any priority for places to the ethos.
- 2.7 Local authorities are required to make a report to the Schools Adjudicator about admission arrangements in their area by 30 June each year, including how well the local Fair Access Protocol is working.
- 2.8 A summary of the main changes is attached as Appendix A. Education Leeds will ensure that all of the new requirements are fulfilled, and will work with the schools and Diocesan bodies to make arrangements for the implementation of the changes.

3.0 **KEY ISSUE**

- 3.1 The key role of the Admission Forum is in ensuring a fair admissions system that promotes social equity and it must act in accordance with the School Admissions Code issued by the DCSF.
- 3.2 The membership of the Admission Forum requires fundamental changes. The Forum must now contain no more than 20 members.
- 3.3 **Proposed membership:**
- Two community schools representatives (one high and one primary)
 - One voluntary controlled school member

- One voluntary Aided school member
- One Foundation school member
- One member from a Jewish primary
- One Academy member
- One College member
- One CE Diocesan member
- One Catholic Diocesan member
- Two parent members
- Fair Access project director
- Choice Adviser
- Two local authority representatives
- Four community members representing local interest to include
- Leeds Black Governors Information Network
- Leeds Primary Care Trust

3.4 Regulation 8 of the Local Authority Report Regulations stipulates the minimum requirements with regard to membership, and the School Admissions Code makes further recommendations. All admission authorities must comply with the mandatory requirements within the Code.

3.5 The Regulations state that there must be **at least 1** representative of each of the following schools that are within the relevant area:

Community
Voluntary Controlled
Voluntary Aided
Foundation
Academy
City Technology College

The representative must be the headteacher or a governor appointed following a nomination by the governing body.

3.6 The Regulations further state that there must be **one** representative from each body representing the religion of any foundation or voluntary school or academy that has been established with a religious character.

3.7 There must be **at least one** parent representative, and that parent must reside within the relevant area, and have a child over the age of two, and below compulsory school age, in receipt of education.

3.8 Finally there must be **at least one** representative of community interests that has not been represented by any of the above.

3.9 The School Admissions Code requires that membership of the Forum must reflect the types of schools in the locality by including a representative of each faith group represented by schools in the area. This adds clarity to the regulations and is reflective of the current membership.

3.10 There must be **up to two** local authority representatives (as the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools). The DCSF guidance is that these representatives are not intended to be Elected Members as there should not be undue political influence within the Forum. However this is only guidance. There are currently more than two Elected Members from Leeds on the Forum.

3.11 There should be other representatives including local employers, service personnel (where there are significant service communities in the relevant area) and the Choice adviser.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

4.1 The current Admissions Forum has discussed the changes to membership and has put forward their views or revised membership. These include the required membership in relation to schools and religious bodies, two parent representatives and some community interest. Whilst we do not have City Technology College in Leeds a representative from the colleges in Leeds has been a member of the Forum for some time. This has proved beneficial to the Forum and it is proposed that this continue.

4.2 There must be no more than two local authority representatives on the Forum. The existing Forum have proposed that both should be elected members, and the guidance issued by the DCSF suggesting that this was not the intention was not received until after the last meeting of the Forum. No more than two clearly indicates that other members should not also fall into the category of local authority representatives.

5.0 **LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As the School Admission Code is mandatory and there are regulations underpinning the Code, then it is necessary to make the amendments to the membership of the Admission Forum. The local authority are responsible for establishment of the forum.

The full coordination of all school places, covering both primary and secondary admissions into Reception and year 7, plus the addition of all in year transfers will result in a significant increase in workload for the Admissions Team. Every effort to streamline processes and reduce the impact will be made during the planning for the changes.

6.0 **PROPOSAL**

6.1 That Executive Board utilise the full membership capacity of twenty in order to achieve a broad range of interest groups represented on the Forum. That the value of parental contribution be recognised by having two members. The project directors from the re-inclusion panels operating the fair access protocol bring valuable expertise to the Forum and that one member represent this interest. The Choice Adviser works closely with parents less able to engage with the admissions process and would provide valuable insight.

7.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 The Executive Board is asked to:

- Note the report.
- Agree the core membership of the Forum as outlined in 3.3.

Background Papers

Local Authority Reports Regulations.
Schools Admission Code